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ABSTRACT

The nature and development of the recently released International English Language Testing System (IELTS) instrument are described. The test is the result of a joint Australian-British project to develop a new test for use with foreign students planning to study in English-speaking countries. It is expected that the modular instrument will become the principal test taken by overseas students intending to study or train in Australia or Great Britain, and comprehensive test administration procedures are being established in most parts of the world. It assesses both general proficiency and English for academic and other special purposes in one of four broad discipline areas (general training, arts and social sciences, physical sciences and technology, and life and medical sciences). An introductory section offers background information on the test construction process, and subsequent sections describe in greater detail the test format, subtests and specifications, efforts to make the test international in nature and to limit cultural bias, and issues in test management and administration. A brief bibliography is included. (Author/MSE)

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THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM (IELTS): ITS NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM (IELTS): ITS NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT

This paper outlines the nature and development of the recently released IELTS Test. This test is the result of a joint Australian-British project (with some contribution from Canada and some from individuals in other countries) to develop a new test for use with overseas students going to study in English-speaking countries. It is expected that the test will rapidly become the principal test taken by overseas students intending to study or train in Australia or Britain and comprehensive test administration procedures and centres are being established to allow candidates in most parts of the world to take the test more or less on demand. The test is the result of a two-year project that set out to revise the British Council's former ELTS Test but has developed essentially a new test able to assess both general proficiency (especially in Listening and Speaking) and ESP/EAP proficiency (especially in Reading and Writing) in one of four broad discipline areas drawing on many of the main item types available. The paper describes the test, outlines the way in which the new test was developed in order to draw widely on the expertise available in the participating countries, and indicates briefly the international management arrangements established.

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I INTRODUCTION:

The International English Language Testing System was formally released for use in November 1989 and is now available in Britain, throughout Australia, in all British Council offices around the world, in the Australian Education Centres and IDP Offices being established in many Asian and Pacific countries, and in other centres where trained administrators are available. The test is the result of a two-year project jointly conducted by Australia and Britain with additional input from Canada and from some individuals elsewhere. The project was funded and directed by the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges, the British Council, and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The project was led by a team based at the University of Lancaster under the direction of Dr Charles Alderson with the day-to-day activities conducted by Caroline Clapham, supported by a large and varying number of item-writers and reference persons in Britain, Australia, and Canada. A Steering Committee with membership from both countries and including the Project Team oversighted the project in Britain while, in Australia, in addition to teams of item-writers, there was a small Working Party to coordinate Australia's contribution. Australia's input to the Project Team was provided by locating the present writer in Lancaster for 13 months in 1987-8 and Dr Patrick Griffin for approximately two months in 1988 while major contributions to

the project have continued to be made from Australia throughout the development phase and beyond. The basic reason for the two countries' collaborating to produce the test is that such collaboration shares the inevitably large development cost, draws on a larger and more diverse group of item-writers, and, more importantly, increases considerably the worldwide network of test administration centres available to candidates.

The purpose of the project has been to provide a test suitable for assessing the English proficiency (both general and special purpose) of the large and growing number of international students wishing to study, train or learn English in Australia, Britain, and other English-speaking countries. The test seeks, first, to establish whether such students have sufficient English to undertake training and academic programmes without their study or training being unduly inhibited by their English skills; second, to provide a basis on which to estimate the nature and length of any pre-sessional English course required; third, to provide Australian ELICOS centres (ie, public or private schools providing English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) with a measurement of general proficiency that will indicate the likely level and course needs of students wishing to learn English; and, fourth, when the students exit from an English course, to provide them with an internationally used and recognized statement of English proficiency.

II FORM OF THE IELTS:

The form that the IELTS takes has been determined by the purposes it has to serve, evaluations of earlier tests, needs analyses of end-users of the test's results, and significant changes in applied linguistics through the 1980's (especially growing scepticism about the practicality of Munby-type needs analysis [Munby 1978] and ESP theory).

The purposes the IELTS serves require that it provide a valid and reliable measure of a person's practical proficiency both for general and for academic purposes. Because of the large number of students involved, the test has to be readily and rapidly administered and marked, preferably by clerical rather than more expensive professional staff, and able to be administered on demand, worldwide, *en masse* (except for the Speaking test), and often in remote localities by persons with little training, little professional supervision, and no access to sophisticated equipment such as language laboratories. In addition, once the test has been taken and scored, its results must be readily interpretable even by non-professionals such as institutions' admission officers.

The large number of candidates to whom the test has to be administered also implies a diversity of academic or training fields within which candidates' English proficiency should be measured. While face validity would suggest that the test

should have modules relevant to the specific academic or training fields candidates wish to enter, the sheer diversity of those fields (one count, for example, in'..ated 34 different fields within Engineering) makes a hard version of specific purpose testing impractical while, in any case, there has been growing scepticism through the 1980's about the validity of hard versions of ESP theory and whether the registers of different academic or vocational fields are sufficiently different to warrant different tests in any but very broad domains [see Alderson and Urquhart 1985].

In addition to the constraints imposed by the purposes the test serves, its form was influenced by the pre-development studies made in the course of various evaluations of the British Council's English Language Testing Service (ELTS) [see Clapham 1987, Criper and Davies 1986, ELTS 1987c] and of the needs of end-users of the test's results. These had emphasized the need to limit the total length of the test to less than three hours, the need to provide measures of both general proficiency and ESP/EAP not least in order to ensure face validity, the contrasting need to limit the number of modules in order to simplify administration, the need to provide a profile of results for the four macroskills but to improve the reliability of the Speaking and Writing tests, the desirability of maintaining the use of nine-point band scales and of ensuring that the results (expressed in band scale levels) were readily interpretable, the importance of

providing clear and precise specifications to facilitate test replication, and the need for the test to be able to be administered by relatively untrained persons. Changes in testing itself in the last two decades have also played down the value of multiple choice item types and emphasized the need to use types that replicate as far as possible real language use. Considerable thought was given to whether or not the test should include a sub-test specifically focusing on grammar and lexis and, indeed, early versions of the test included a Grammar sub-test which was dropped only after the initial trials and statistical analyses showed that it provided little additional information on a candidate's proficiency.

Because the test is used to assess candidates of a wide range of language proficiency, it was necessary to structure the test to provide measures of proficiency, as far as possible, throughout the band scale range. This was achieved by having the General component (Listening and Speaking) and the General Training sub-test focus especially around Band level 4 while the EAP/ESP component focuses around Band level 6 without, in both cases, excluding the possibility of information being provided about candidates above and below these levels. In addition, within each sub-test, different phases of the sub-test are focused around different band levels in order to provide graduation within the sub-test as well as between the General and Modular components.

As already indicated, the purposes the IELTS has to serve necessitate that it assess both general proficiency and ESP/EAP proficiency. Consequently, the test has two components. a General Component which has sub-tests in Listening and Speaking and an ESP/EAP component (loosely known as the "Modular" component) which seeks to assess proficiency in Reading and Writing in English for Academic Purposes in one of three broad academic fields (Arts and Social Sciences, Physical Sciences and Technology, and Life and Medical Sciences) and in general proficiency in Reading and Writing in the General Training sub-test. Hence, the overall structure of the IELTS is as appears in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overall Structure of the IELTS

International English Language Testing System

General Comp.	Band Focus	Modular Comp.	Band Focus
Speaking	4 (3-6)	A Phys. Scs. & Tech	6 (5-7)
Listening	4 (3-6)	B Life & Med. Scs.	6 (5-7)
		C Arts & Soc. Scs.	6 (5-7)
		General Training	4 (3-6)

The nature and purpose of the modular components raise some difficult issues for the form of the test. For reasons already indicated, the three ESP/EAP modules are less specific than, for instance, the former ELTS test and favour the features and academic skills of the broader rather than more specific discipline areas. In addition to the reasons already stated for this, the less specific nature of the Ms and their greater focus on EAP rather than ESP make them more compatible with their use with both undergraduates and graduates. Since some graduates (e.g., an Engineer taking an MBA) and many undergraduates are often, though not always, just entering a field while many graduates are continuing in their field, there seems at first sight to be some illogicality in using the same ESP-EAP test with both groups but it does seem reasonable to assess whether, whatever their background, applicants to study in a field have both general proficiency and the ability to apply their language to cope with the broad range of academic tasks and register features of the broad discipline area to be entered. However, the M's were considered inappropriate for persons at lower levels of academic development (upper Secondary School), for persons entering vocational training such as apprenticeships, or for persons participating in on-the-job attachments. For these, the emphasis is on general proficiency and consequently they take the G component together with the General Training (GT)

module which, like the M's, assesses reading and writing skills but in general and training contexts rather than in discipline-related academic contexts. Persons undertaking training or attachments that make more significant academic demands would take the relevant M rather than the GT (eg, persons entering a diploma-level TAFE course, persons going on attachment to a scientific laboratory, or subject-specialist teachers going for practical training, work experience or on exchange in a school). To prevent candidates' taking the General Training module rather than one of the other modules in the belief that it is easier to score higher on the more general test, an arbitrary ceiling of Band 6 has been imposed on the General Training module. The logic, practical value and validity of this decision have yet to be fully tested and will, undoubtedly, be an issue for future consideration by the International Editing committee.

The effect of the pattern of sub-tests just outlined is to enable the IELTS to provide a comprehensive measure of general proficiency in all four macroskills using the two General component sub-tests in Listening and Speaking and the General Training sub-test in Reading and Writing. For Australian purposes, this makes the test relevant to ELICOS needs where, for persons entering or exiting from a general English course, a comprehensive test of general proficiency is needed. The availability of the EAP/ESP sub-tests in Reading and Writing

means that candidates at higher proficiency levels in all four macroskills can also have their proficiency comprehensively assessed though with Reading and Writing bei , assessed in broad ESP/EAP contexts. It is regrettable that the decision to limit maximum General Training scores to Band 6 prevents persons with high general proficiency in Reading and Writing but no ESP or EAP development from having their skills fully assessed.

III Sub-Tests and Specifications:

The current form of the IELTS as released in November 1989 is the result of more than two years' work but the permanent administrative structures allow for considerable on-going development and review activity and, in any case, the test specifications give considerable freedom to item-writers to vary actual item types within clearly stated guidelines. No decision concerning the form and detailed specifications of the test has been taken lightly but, nevertheless, the need to adhere strictly to the original release date of October-November 1989 inevitably meant that some issues will be subject to further trial and investigation and this, together with the continual review process, will mean that the test is not static (and hence rapidly dated) but is in a state of constant evolution.

Detailed specifications have been prepared for all sub-tests so as to facilitate test replication and so that item-writers can, within defined limits be allowed some flexibility in devising parallel forms of the test. This flexibility is desirable for reasons of test security, to try to ensure that it is proficiency that is being measured and fostered through the washback effect rather than merely the ability to perform specified item types, and to encourage the sort of innovation on the part of item-writers that might lead to progressive improvement in what we would claim is already a valuable test.

The specifications take broadly similar forms subject to the necessary variations arising from the different macroskills. The **Introduction** to all the Specifications outlines the purpose of the IELTS, the nature of the particular test, the target population, the focus of the test (especially in terms of Band Scale levels, tasks, materials, registers and discourse styles), and cultural appropriacy. The next section describes the test structure in detail. In the Speaking test, the structure is described in terms of the length of the interview, the five phases with the purpose, tasks and stimuli, and skills and functions for each. In the Listening test, the Structure is described in terms of the time for the test, the stages and, for each stage, the text types, style, utterance rates, item types, skills and functions, contextual features (such as ambient noise, register shifts, number of

speakers, accents, and situations), and possible topics. The Ms indicate test focus in terms of band levels, academic tasks, source and audience, the proficiency level, length and structure of texts, and the test tasks that may be included. All Specifications are accompanied by the appropriate Band Scale or, in the case of Writing, Band Scales and by guidelines for non-sexist language.

The Specifications for the International English Language Testing System describe the general nature and purpose of the whole test battery thus:

> "The IELTS is a language test battery designed to assess the proficiency of candidates whose first language is not English and who are applying to undertake study or training through the medium of English. It is primarily intended to *select* candidates who meet specified proficiency requirements for their designated programmes. Its secondary purpose is to be a semi-diagnostic test designed to reveal broad areas in which problems with English language use exist, but not to identify the detailed nature of those problems.
>
> "The test battery consists of a General and a Modular section. The General section contains tests of general language proficiency in the areas of listening and speaking; the Modular section consists of tests of reading and writing for academic purposes."

During the investigations that were conducted prior to the commencement of the development project, informants asked for the Listening sub-test to be included in the modular component because of the importance of students' being able to listen to a lecture, take notes, and carry out a writing task. However, the need to minimize administration time and to be able to administer the test *en masse* often without access to a language laboratory made this proposal impractical even for the four broad fields catered for in the Modular component of the test. Consequently, Listening is part of the general component and has two stages, the first relating to social situations and the second to course-related situations. A variety of item types may be used including information transfer (such as form-filling, completing a diagram, following routes on a map), more traditional true-false and multiple-choice types, and open-ended (but exhaustively specifiable) answers to questions. Speakers are to be "intelligible native speakers" from one or more of the three countries involved in the project (Australia, Britain and Canada). Discourse styles differ through the test and include conversation, monologue, and formal and informal lectures. Utterance rates are graduated through the test from the lower to middle range of native speaker rates and the contextual features listed ensure that candidates are required to cope with varied accents, different utterance rates, varied but relevant situations, and register shifts.

The Speaking sub-test is discussed in detail elsewhere [Ingram 1990]. In brief, it is a direct test of oral proficiency in which the specifications and test outline seek to exercise more control over the interviewer's options than in more traditional approaches using, for example, the ASLPR or FSI Scales. The interview lasts eleven to fifteen minutes, is in five phases, and includes activities that progressively extend the candidate and give him or her the opportunity to lead the discussion. After a short introductory phase in which the interviewer elicits basic personal information, Phase Two gives candidates the opportunity to provide more extended speech about some familiar aspect of their own culture or some familiar topic of general interest. Phase Three uses information gap tasks to have the candidate elicit information and, perhaps, solve a problem. Phase Four draws on a short curriculum vitae filled out by candidates before the interview in order to have them speculate about their future, express attitudes and intentions, and discuss in some detail their field of study and future plans. There is a very short concluding phase entailing little more than the exchange of good wishes and farewell. Assessment is by matching observed language behaviour against a band scale containing nine brief performance descriptions from 1 (Non-Speaker) to 9 (Expert Speaker). Interviewers are native speakers, trained ESL teachers who have undergone short formal training in

administering the Speaking test with an additional requirement to work through an interviewer training package at regular intervals. All interviews are audio-recorded with a 10% sample being returned to Australia or Britain for monitoring of interview quality and moderation of assessments assigned. This sub-test is of particular interest from a test design point of view since it draws on the developments in "direct", interview-based assessment of the last two decades but seeks to control the interview to maximize validity and reliability for large-scale administration often in remote locations using minimally trained interviewers. Of particular importance is the attempt made in the interview to surrender initiative from the interviewer to the candidate (especially in Phase 3) because of the importance, in English-speaking academic environments, of students' being willing to ask questions and seek information for themselves.

Three of the modular tests assess reading and writing in ESP-EAP contexts while the General Training module (to be discussed subsequently) assesses them in general and training contexts. It was noted earlier that these tests each have to be appropriate for candidates in a wide range of disciplines and for both those entering and those continuing in their field. Consequently, though reading or stimulus materials are chosen from within the broad discipline areas of the target

population of the module, neutral rather than highly discipline-specific texts are to be used, which excludes such material as is found in textbooks so that item-writers are required to choose "(scientific) magazines, books, academic papers and well-written newspaper articles [in a relevant field] written by scientists for the informed lay person and for scientists in other fields". Reading and writing are integrated so that, as is integral to academic writing, at least one of the writing tasks draws on material in one or more of the reading texts. The difficulty level of the texts is to be within the target proficiency range (Bands 5 to 7) except that, where the Writing test draws on reading material for input to the writing task, the difficulty level should not exceed Band 5 so as to minimize the chance of reading interfering with the candidate's ability to demonstrate writing proficiency. The reading tasks focus on tasks relevant to academic reading and include, amongst others, identifying structure, content and procedures, following instructions, finding main ideas, identifying underlying themes, evaluating and challenging evidence, reaching a conclusion, and drawing logical inferences. Though the reading test items have to be clerically markable, they make use of a variety of item types including, *inter alia*, cloze-type procedures, summary completion, table completion, heading insertion, multiple choice, and exhaustively specifiable open-ended questions.

The writing tasks are as realistic as possible and require the sort of activity that candidates will have to do on entering and pursuing their courses, including, amongst others, organizing and presenting data, describing an object or event, explaining how something works, presenting and justifying an opinion or hypothesis, comparing and contrasting evidence, arguing a case, and evaluating and challenging evidence. The assessment procedure for the Writing test is the most complicated in the test battery and uses three different sub-scales for each of the two tasks in the Writing test. These have then to be converted to a single band scale score. Whether this more analytic approach to assessing writing proficiency is more valid and reliable than the simpler use of a single more global band scale or whether the increased complexity and time demands of the scoring procedure mitigate any possible benefit from the analytic approach has yet to be convincingly demonstrated by research and this will undoubtedly be one of the urgent matters to be re-considered by the International Editing Committee now that the test has been formally released. The approach to writing assessment used in the IELTS is to be discussed in a workshop presentation elsewhere in the 1990 RELC Seminar.

The General Training test focuses on Bands 3 to 6 (rising through the test) with, as already noted, a ceiling of Band 6 on scores that can be assigned. The tasks are required to

focus on those skills and functions relevant to survival in English speaking countries and in training programmes including, amongst others, following and responding to instructions, identifying content and main ideas, retrieving general factual information, and identifying the underlying theme or concept. Texts should not be specific to a particular field, may be journalistic, and should include types relevant to training contexts and survival in English speaking countries (e.g., notices, posters, straightforward forms and documents, institutional handbooks, and short newspaper articles). Some of the possible item types in the reading test may include inserting headings, information transfer, multiple choice, short-answer questions with exhaustively specifiable answers, and summary completion. In the Writing test, the skills and functions that may be tested include presenting data, giving instructions, expressing needs and wants, expressing an opinion, providing general factual information, and engaging in personal correspondence in a variety of topics relevant to training and survival in an English speaking country.

Some examples of item types have been given in discussing the form of the sub-tests. Their choice is constrained by several factors that are not always compatible, including economy of administration and scoring and the need to provide a realistic measure of the candidate's practical proficiency. To reduce

costs, the tests are designed to be clerically, and hence essentially, objectively, markable except for Speaking and Writing which are assessed directly against Band Scales by ESL teachers trained and accredited to assess. Some use of multiple-choice questions remains though all items are contextualized and item-writers are required at all times to consider the realism of the task the candidate is being asked to undertake. Item-writers are also required at all times to relate texts, items and anticipated candidate responses to the Band Scales so as to facilitate interpretation, to provide the required band scale focus, and to ensure an appropriate gradation through the test.

The proficiency level of the test and its component parts is a critical issue determining its overall usefulness. It was important, in order for the test to meet the variety of needs it was intended to cover, that it have a wide proficiency range and provide a measure of proficiency in all four macroskills. The General component and General Training consequently focus around Band 4 and the three academic sub-tests focus around Band 6 with the band scale spread shown in Figure 1 (without excluding the possibility in all sub-tests of information being provided on candidates above or below these levels) but, in addition and as already indicated, the sections within each sub-test are graduated to enable each to

cater for a wider range of candidates. In other words, though the IELTS is designed to select candidates for academic courses and training programmes, it does not just adopt a threshold approach but is designed to make a statement about candidates' proficiencies whatever their level might be.

It was indicated earlier that it was a requirement on the Project Team to keep the total length of the IELTS below three hours. The actual length of the current form of the test is a maximum of 145 minutes made up of 30 minutes for the Listening test, the Speaking test is 11 to 15 minutes, and the Ms are 100 minutes with 55 minutes for Reading and 45 for Writing.

IV The International Nature of the Test:

The new test, as the name indicates, is the result of an international project involving three English-speaking countries with their own distinctive dialects and cultures. The test has to be seen to be an international test and to be appropriate to all candidates whatever their country of origin and target country. This has significantly affected the operation of the development project and the content of the test and is a continual factor in determining the permanent management structures and technical operations.

In development and administration, the IELTS has had to recognize the respective roles and contributions of the participating countries (especially Australia and Britain, the principal participants, and now the owners of the test), to recognize and utilize the expertise in those countries, and to be clearly the result of the equal-status collaboration of the participating countries. It has been necessary, therefore, to ensure major contributions to all phases of the project from both Australia and Britain even though the development project was based in Lancaster. Hence, the present writer was based in Lancaster for 13 months and Patrick Griffin for 6 weeks, an Australian Working Party provided additional support, and major contributions continued from Australia throughout 1989 after the present writer returned to Australia from Lancaster. The permanent management, development and administration arrangements for the test to be referred to below are also designed to ensure equal ownership and involvement by both Australia and Britain. Indeed, in the unlikely event that either country were to take action that would relegate the role of the other to a more subordinate position in management, development, monitoring, or supporting research, the international arrangements would probably cease and, in Australia's case, a new Australian test acceptable to Australian institutions and the large ELICOS market would have to be devised. There is no reason to anticipate such an

unsatisfactory event occurring since the project has proceeded harmoniously and effectively and the point is made here solely to stress t' _ importance placed on the international nature of the test, its development, and its on-going management. A number of factors arising from the internationalism of the test are worthy of note.

First, participating countries have had to adjust their requirements for test content to accommodate each other's needs. Thus, for instance, the non-academic module in the former ELTS test has been changed to meet Australian ELICOS needs so that the IELTS General Training module includes a lower proficiency range, and focuses mainly around general proficiency in reading and writing.

Second, care is taken to ensure that place names or anything else identified with one country are balanced by features identified with the other and unnecessary references to one or the other country are avoided so as to ensure that nothing is done that could lead the test to be associated with any one of the participating countries or to bias the test towards candidates going or going back to any of the countries.

Third, in language and culture, the test focuses on international English rather than on British, Australian or Canadian English. On the cultural level, it is reasonable to expect that candidates learning English will learn the general culture that underlies the language and constitutes the meaning system. However, an international test must avoid country-specific assumptions based on just one of the cultures involved. To do this, however, requires careful editing by testers from all participating countries since it is often impossible for a person, however expert but locked in his or her own culture, even to recognize when knowledge of certain aspects of his or her culture is assumed. On one occasion during the writing of an early item in a draft Listening test, for example, the present writer, coming from Australia where mail is delivered once a day, Monday to Friday, interpreted a question and marked a multiple choice answer quite differently from what was intended by the British writer who assumed that mail was normally delivered once or twice a day, six days a week. In another question in another sub-test, a person familiar with Australian culture would have marked a different multiple-choice answer because of assumptions arising from the fact that, in Australia, large numbers of sheep are trucked on road trains and so a large flock could be "driven" from one place to another whereas, if they had been walked there (which

the British test writer intended), the verb used would have been "to drove".

Fourth, the Specifications for all the sub-tests include a section on cultural appropriacy which emphasizes the need for the test to be equally appropriate for students going to any of the participating countries and the need to avoid country-specific cultural knowledge and lexical and other items identified with any one variety of English. The section on cultural appropriacy also emphasizes the need to avoid topics or materials that may offend on religious, political or cultural grounds and to observe international guidelines for non-sexist language.

V Management and Administration:

As already indicated, the IELTS is available worldwide from British Council offices, Australian Education Centres, offices of the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges (IDP), and from other places administered by the British Council or IDP where trained administrators, interviewers and markers are available. Where both Australian and British offices are available, the centres are required to work cooperatively rather than in competition. Both countries are responsible for the training of

administrators, interviewers and markers working to an agreed training schedule and both countries will take responsibility for the monitoring and moderation of interviewing and the rating of Speaking and Writing proficiencies. Both countries will also cooperate in other aspects of IELTS administration, management, technical development, and related research and the supporting structures have been established to ensure that this occurs.

The senior management body is the International Management Committee with equal representation from Britain and Australia. The senior technical body is the International Editing Committee which consists of the two (i.e., Australian and British) Chief Examiners and a chairperson. The chairs of the IMC and IEC are to alternate between Britain and Australia, with one being Australian and the other British. In Britain, the test is owned by the British Council which has contracted its management and the technical aspects of the on-going test development to the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate while, in Australia, a consortium of institutions, called "IELTS Australia", has been established with IDP holding half the shares. The item-writing is carried out equally in both countries by teams of item-writers engaged for the purpose with items being submitted to the national Chief Examiner and subsequently to the International Editing Committee before formal trialling takes place. At least one

parallel form of the test will be developed each year though it is strongly to be hoped that this number will rapidly increase in order to ensure test security.

V. Conclusion:

The International English Language Testing System is a test of some considerable interest for several reasons. First, it will rapidly become (if it is not already) the principal test of English proficiency to be taken by students or trainees going to Australia and Britain to study, train or learn English. Second, this is probably the first time that a major test has been developed and maintained in an international project of this sort, in which, in addition to technical cooperation, the project has sought and continues to seek to draw equally on the testing expertise available in the participating countries, to foster that expertise on a wide scale by the deliberate involvement of applied linguists across each nation, and to develop a test compatible with the needs, dialects and cultures of the participating countries. Third, certain features of the test itself are of interest, not least the structured controls on the Speaking test and the attempt to give candidates the opportunity to take initiative during the interview. Fourth, there has been a deliberate attempt throughout the development process to consider the washback effect of the test on English language teaching in

other countries and to adopt test techniques that are more likely to have a favourable influence on the teaching of English. Finally, the sheer magnitude of the project, the large number of candidates that will be taking the test, and the need for much on-going test monitoring and regeneration will provide a considerable stimulus to the development of language testing as a skilled activity in both countries. It is, for instance, not coincidental that the recently established Languages Institute of Australia (a nationally funded centre for research and information in applied linguistics in Australia) includes within it two language testing units established in two of the institutions most involved in Australia's contribution to the development of the International English Language Testing System.

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